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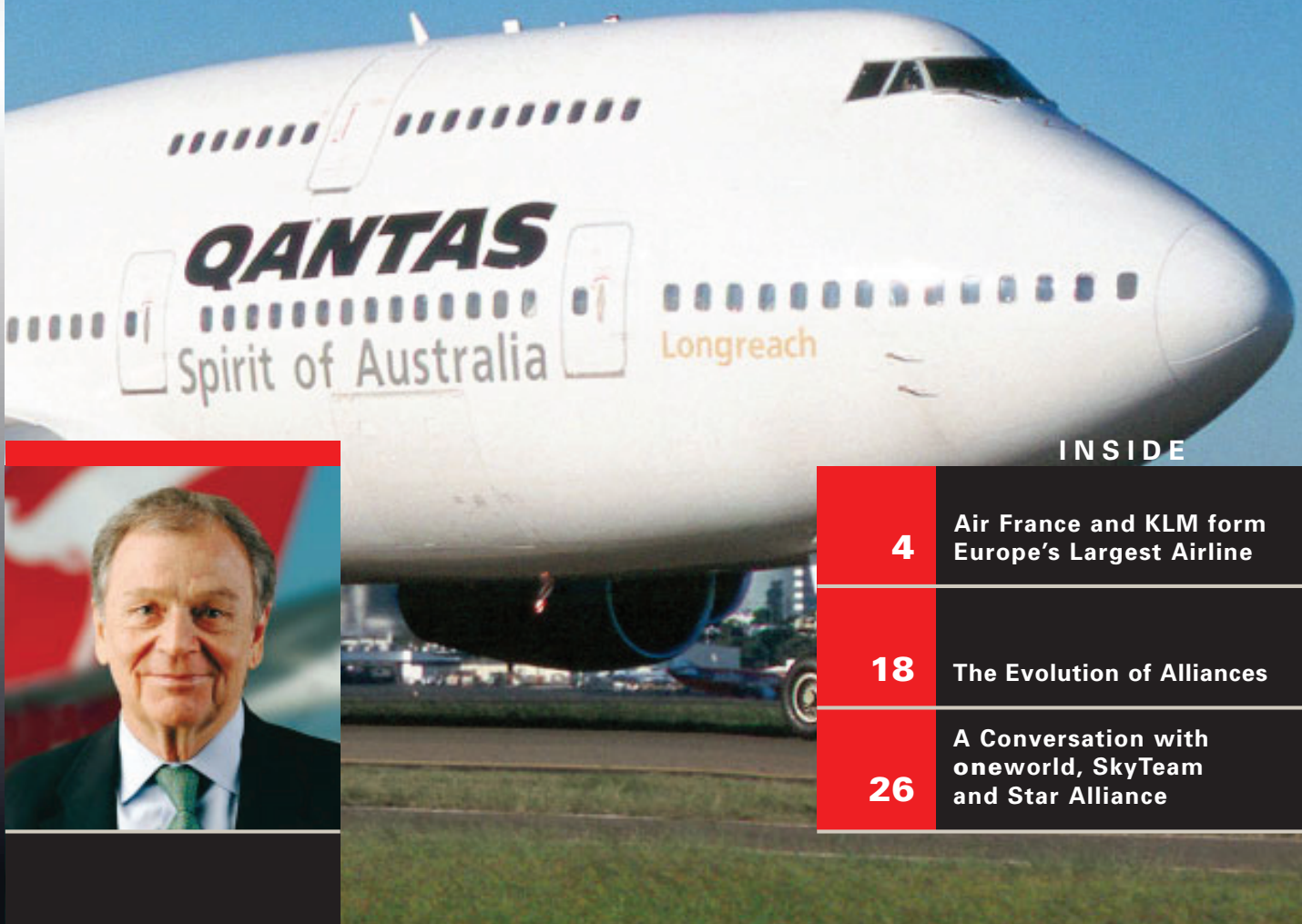
# ascend

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# Share and CodeShare Alike

*Codeshare agreements and alliance memberships can multiply the complexity of an airline's schedule distribution process. But the use of advanced technology, such as the Sabre® AirFlite™ Planning and Scheduling Suite, can optimize the process.*

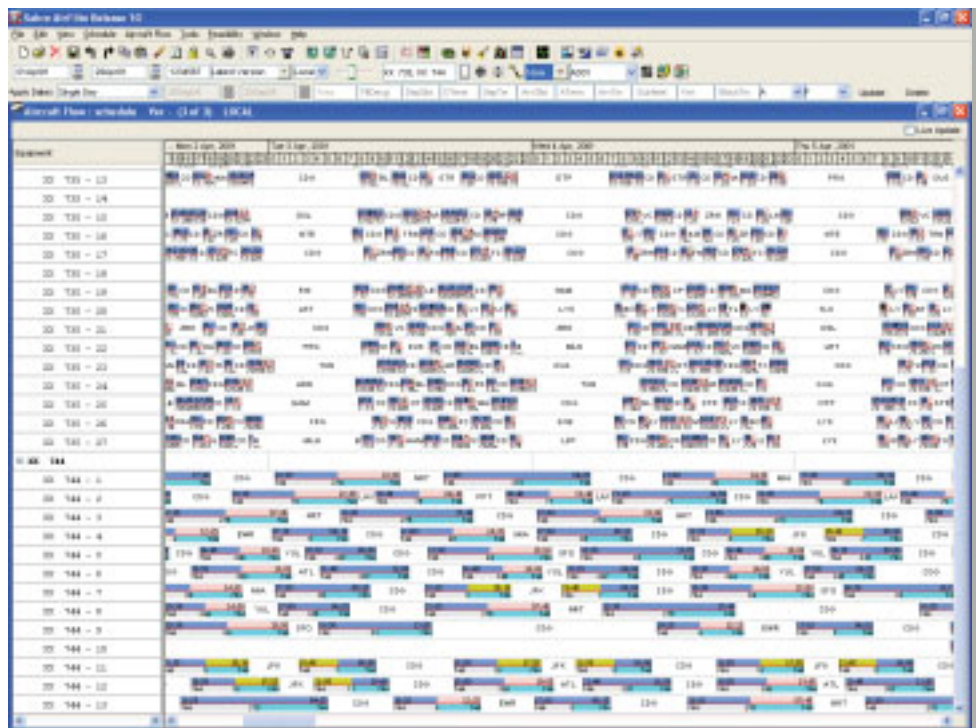
■ By Kevin Stupfel | *Ascend Contributor*

The codeshare revolution has pushed the schedule distribution departments at many airlines to the brink. Not only has the volume of data increased exponentially, but also the increased complexity of codeshare relationships requires greater analysis to extract the maximum value from each partnership. Airlines have struggled to find automated solutions that simplify the problem, but they usually resort to additional resources to manage the demands of publishing an accurate and timely schedule.

Today's airline landscape has forced the distribution strategies of just 10 years ago to change drastically. Historically, codeshare agreements were commuter franchise arrangements using a shared designator. Without duplicate legs to worry about, distribution was as straightforward as tacking the commuter schedule to the end of the mainline timetable. The birth of duplicate legs added complexity to the distribution, requiring carriers to update their codeshare schedules in a coordinated manner with their partners' updates.

The current challenge facing many airlines is far more than just a clerical distribution problem. The codeshare agreement of yesterday, when airlines extended their networks beyond a gateway, no longer meets the needs of airline planners. Today, partners operate in the same home geographic region, causing network analysis to be pushed to a new level of sophistication. With the complexity and rapid development of codeshares, manual processing is no longer an adequate solution.

While the surge of codeshare flights in overlapping networks is a relatively new concept, the technology that has supported the major alliances for years is already capable of supporting the complex analytical and distribution needs created by these agreements. A suite of tools can help automate the schedule distribution process, ensuring that airlines real-



**Gantt charts with an easy-to-use graphical user interface enable airline analysts to quickly and effectively evaluate and modify their flight schedules, minimizing disruptions and reducing costs.**

ize the maximum benefits from their codeshare relationships. The *Sabre® AirFlite™ Planning and Scheduling Suite*, for example, has been modified specifically for the distribution needs of partners in the Star Alliance, and the experience can be applied to any codeshare relationship as well.

The distribution strategy begins with the exchange of industry-standard schedule files. Chapter 7 of the Standard Schedules Information Manual, or SSIM, is the most widely accepted and should be easily created

and used by all partners. A graphical schedule editing tool, such as the *The Sabre® AirFlite™ Schedule Manager*, can easily read any partner's SSIM and display the information for the analyst to examine. Like *Schedule Manager*, systems should be able to retain all of the commercial information, such as passenger reservations booking designators and in-flight service indicators, to be used later in the distribution process.

The tricky part of processing a partner's schedule is mapping the codeshare flight

numbers onto the new schedule. In a traditional codeshare arrangement, where airlines share services beyond a gateway, a tool such as the *Sabre® AirFlite™ Codeshare Manager* can automate the overwhelming task of assigning flight numbers. The tool will carefully analyze both the passenger connection rules and the underlying agreement to ensure that the correct passenger origin and destination combinations are continuously served.

Partnerships where the networks overlap or where nearly every flight in the network is shared with a partner require a more powerful tool to forecast the overall network profitability. This analysis is performed prior to flight number assignment to choose the optimal set of flights to apply to the codeshare route. A forecasting tool, such as the *Sabre® AirFlite™ Profit Manager*, is needed to predict the share of traffic flowing from the codeshare network onto the mainline services and can quantify the profitability benefit of each codeshare service. Since time is limited between the moment the partner schedule is received and the codeshare schedule must be distributed, these tools will improve the codeshare selection process.

In the distribution solution engineered for the Star Alliance, it was important for one partner to be responsible for selecting

codeshare flights. The major alliances use different strategies for assigning responsibility, but they all have one carrier empowered to make the decisions and keep the distribution process flowing smoothly. In many cases, the operating carrier or marketing carrier is responsible for its individual flights rather than empowering one partner for all shared flying.

Once the task of flight selection and flight number assignment is complete, the distribution task shifts to the efficient data preparation of the codeshare schedule for external distribution. The timing is critical to coordinate the external release of schedule data at the same time as the partner carrier. The schedule system must read and store the appropriate data from the partner's SSIM to reattach the information for external distribution about the codeshare relationship. If an alliance partner offers dinner and a movie, then its codeshare partners must also show this information on their codeshare service for competitive reasons.

Not all commercial data can be derived from a partner's SSIM. A tool must apply the proper traffic restrictions to meet the marketing goal of the codeshare as well as remain compliant with all governmental regulations. Additionally, the PRBDs are important to a distribution strategy. In some cases, a carrier's

PRBDs must be derived from both a partner's cabin offering and its PRBDs so bookings can map to the appropriate category in the host global distribution system. The *Schedule Manager* can preserve all of the aspects of the partner's schedule and apply the required data in an automated process. It can even derive the appropriate PRBDs using the partner's offering. This automated process can extend the time available for analysis on the schedule knowing the clerical work will be easy and accurate.

With the appropriate automated systems in place, the codeshare analyst can evolve from a clerical position coordinating data entry to a strategic position empowered to maximize the profitability of the codeshare relationship. As technology continues to evolve, the industry must embrace alliances working together to maximize the profitability of the combined network. The effective communication and distribution of codeshare data is the first step in this industry evolution. **E**

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## hightech

### News on New and Improved Products and Services from Sabre Airline Solutions

#### product

*Sabre® AirMax® Low-Fares Manager*

#### description

*AirMax Low-Fares Manager* is the industry's first revenue management solution designed for highly competitive low-cost markets. It delivers enhanced modeling techniques that help airlines effectively minimize revenue dilution due to passenger buy-down behavior.

#### benefits

Utilizing *Low-Fares Manager*, airlines can better manage costs and generate revenue through the system's ability to calculate the price of each seat while remaining competitive.

#### features

■ **Reliable forecasting** — Incorporating advanced algorithms, *Low-Fares Manager* considers data specific to the low-fares environment, resulting in more reliable forecasting that better estimates low-fare demand.

- **Restriction-free pricing** — The system enables carriers to continue effectively managing their revenues by accepting or rejecting passenger bookings based on their overall revenue contributions.
- **Graphical user interface** — With the system's easy-to-use interface, analysts can adjust and override settings such as demand values, fare curves and class-open and class-close timing.
- **Customer buying behavior** — *Low-Fares Manager* estimates customer buying behavior, enabling airlines to adjust inventories and prices in response to demand to generate maximum revenue. **E**